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Law Library Newsletters/Blog

Law Library

10-2020

Law Library Blog (October 2020): Legal Beagle's Blog Archive

Roger Williams University School of Law

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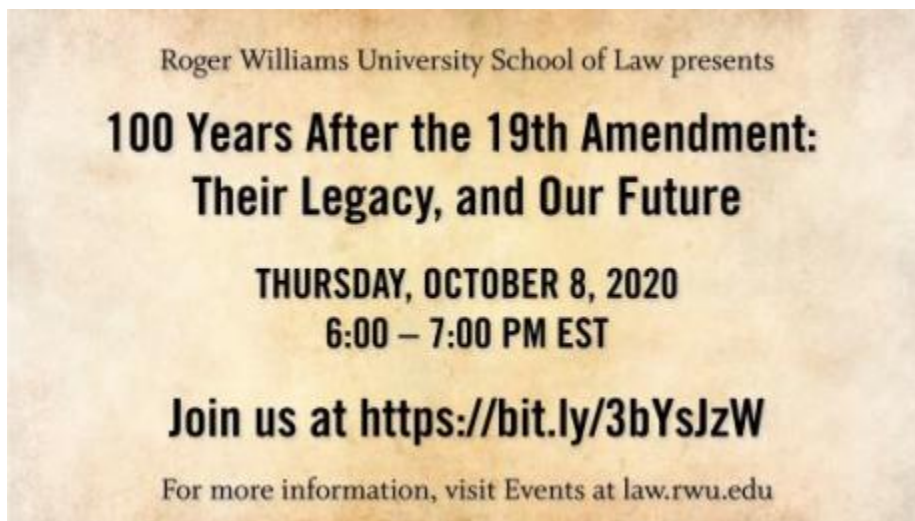
October 2020 Library Blogs

Legal Beagle's Post

October 2, 2020

Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage at RWU Law

October 2, 2020



This week at RWU Law we are celebrating the historic centennial anniversary of women's suffrage in the United States. The ABA Standing Committee on the Law Library of Congress Traveling Exhibit, which features historic photos and artifacts primarily from the Law Library of Congress, details the story of the battle for ratification and outlines the challenges that remain. The 19th Amendment Traveling Exhibit will be at Roger Williams University School of Law Library October 5 – October 9, 2020.

To accompany this exhibit, the library has put together a [resource guide](#). This guide contains books from our collection and online content on this topic.

Additionally, we will be hosting a virtual program for the community on Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Please join us as we celebrate the exhibit, with three leaders discussing diverse aspects of the Amendment's critical and complex legacy – and its meaning for our political future.

Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea will discuss issues surrounding the upcoming 2020 election, and the importance of our vote and engagement in the political process.

Professor Gloria J. Browne-Marshall, of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, will examine the journey of African-American women from suffragists to attorneys and voters, eventually emerging as modern political power-brokers.

Ms. Sara Guillermo, Executive Director of IGNITE, will discuss ways in which women can leverage their political power and unleash their potential in civic and political leadership.

For more information about the event or to register, [click here](#).

October 16, 2020

Meet the Law Library Staff! - Lucinda Harrison-Cox

October 16, 2020



This year the Legal Beagle is featuring blog posts which introduce you (or re-introduce you) to our hard-working and amazing staff. This week meet Lucinda Harrison-Cox, the longest serving member of the law library staff!

Legal Beagle: What is your title?

Lucinda: Associate Law Librarian

Legal Beagle: Can you explain to our readers what you do using non-librarian terms?

Lucinda: I sometimes half-jokingly describe my job as everything no one else wants to do. The fun parts are assisting students learning how to find the information they need and helping them develop the skills that will assist them for the rest of their careers and helping faculty as they work on their research and class preparation. The more mundane parts cover a wide range including assisting with developing library policies, compiling statistics, preparing reports, processing staff leave requests and payroll, maintaining the library's website, administering the system that supports the library room reservations and library guides, providing new staff with the support they need to succeed, and a lot of documenting how things are done (or should be done). Sometimes my job includes installing new book scanners or even working the University COVID testing site.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite book?

Lucinda: There was a time when I would have said my favorites were classic mysteries by authors like Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Georges Simenon, Ngaio Marsh, Arthur Upfield, P.D. James, and Tony Hillerman. Now I spend most of my free time reading works related to genealogy research and filling gaps in my knowledge of the times and places in which those ancestors lived.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite part of your job?

Lucinda: Working directly with students and seeing the moment when the pieces of research start to make sense, the "light-bulb" moment, is magic.

Legal Beagle: What is your favorite meme?

Lucinda: I'm not really into the meme concept. However, I appreciate the messaging behind Rosie the Riveter and the Keep Calm and Carry On themes.

Legal Beagle: What has been your experience in the RWU Law community?

Lucinda: I've been here since the start. I saw the first class of students walk in the doors, the truck loads of books unpacked, processed, and shelved, the furniture arrive, and the first group of graduates walk across the platform to receive their diplomas. We've celebrated accreditation, publications, competition wins, and awards of all kinds. We've consoled each other through losses from 9/11 and Professors Santoro, Kent, and Clark to the everyday struggles with classes and life in general. It has been a constant learning process and never boring.

Legal Beagle: Name something you dislike, but everyone else seems to love.

Lucinda: Football.

October 23, 2020

No-Cost and Low-Cost Legal Research

October 23, 2020



Learning about legal research in law school will generally conjure up images of Lexis and Westlaw. Legal research training in law school will almost invariably focus on these industry standards. Most graduates find themselves reliant on these two legal databases. However, those who end up working at a smaller firm or hanging their shingle may not be able to afford the cost of these. What then? As it happens, there are both low-cost and no-cost options for legal research which a savvy researcher may employ. A few of these are discussed below.

Fastcase

Fastcase is free with bar membership in Massachusetts, New York, and 52 other state, local, and professional bar associations. In addition to being a benefit of many bar associations one can also obtain access to Fastcase directly from the company starting at \$65/month. A researcher familiar with using terms and connectors searching should have no trouble finding the case law they need. The layout and filters of search results resemble what you would find in more expensive databases. Within a single case there are clearly defined links to cited material. Unlike Lexis and Westlaw, which use editorially produced citators, Fastcase utilizes an algorithmic citator capable of identifying negative or neutral cites in subsequent cases.

In addition to its functional legal database, Fastcase expanded its services to include legal publishing including RAIL: The Journal of Robotics, Artificial Intelligence & Law, several other law journals, and secondary sources. Fastcase acquired a docket search tool, Docket Alarm, and has partnerships with several legal publishers to bring secondary sources to the platform.

Casemaker

Casemaker is free with bar membership in Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and 21 other state and local bar associations. You can also obtain Casemaker directly. The basic service price varies by jurisdiction—check your jurisdiction’s pricing at the [Buy Now](#) page. Casemaker also has advanced search functionality like Lexis and Westlaw. If you are familiar with how to conduct a terms and connectors search you should have no trouble finding relevant caselaw on Casemaker. Casemaker also has an algorithmic citator called CaseCheck+ which can identify negative citations. The negative citations are reviewed by Casemaker’s editorial staff. Casemaker also includes CaseDigest, a finding aid, and CiteCheck, a tool to check Bluebook citations.

Casemaker also offers Libra Books as an add-on to its basic system. This option gives the user access to practitioner resources in a variety of practice areas from a variety of publishers.

Casetext

Casetext is a legal research provider which offers an advanced legal research tool starting at \$65/month. Just as the other platforms we explored, a user familiar with terms and connectors searching should have no problem using Casetext to find on-point caselaw. Casetext includes SmartCite, an algorithmic citator with editorial review which can provide alerts for where law has been abrogated or where careful review of citing cases could be required such as for a distinguishing case. Additionally, Casetext has made some innovative improvements to their basic legal research. Examples include: a case heatmap which indicates the most cited portions of the case, an algorithm which finds parenthetical case summaries created by judges, and case analysis prepared by practitioners. Casetext also includes CARA A.I., a tool which utilizes artificial intelligence technology to analyze briefs and suggest cases the researcher has not included in the brief but should consider.

Google Scholar

Many will recognize Google Scholar as tool which can help users identify on point scholarly articles. Google Scholar also collects case law from United States jurisdictions. One can limit to a specific jurisdiction prior to searching. Google Scholar provides the ability to do Boolean searching through its advanced search screen. After searching, Google Scholar allows the user to limit results by using filters. Google Scholar also provides a simple citator to show citing cases, but it does not provide the status of the cited case. Google Scholar is free.

Conclusion

If you are currently a law student, you should familiarize yourself with alternative legal research tools. Doing so now will allow you to do so for free and with the aid of the [RWU Law Library reference team](#). Fastcase and Casemaker are available through the [Law Library’s Digital Resources Guide](#). Law students can obtain free access to [Casetext](#). [Google Scholar](#) is freely available by going to the website.

October 30, 2020

Halloween Obsessions and LP Review Sessions!

October 30, 2020



Imagine enjoying a nice, leisurely stroll through a haunted corn maze when suddenly Jason pops up with a chainsaw, causing you to take a tumble and hurt your ankle. If one of your first thoughts is whether a breach of duty occurred, then you are definitely thinking like a lawyer!

Stop by the Law Library, in-person or virtually, this Halloween season to read about some real-life spooky cases, including ones with chainsaw wielding horror characters! Browse some of the Law Library's more eerie and magical titles, such as:

- [The Little Book of Holiday Law](#) – read about Halloween pranks that went awry.
- [The Judge Who Hated Red Nail Polish & Other Crazy but True Stories of Law & Lawyers](#) – this book gives a much-needed answer to the age-old question: would the law protect you from buying a haunted house?
- [The Law and Harry Potter](#) – if you still pine for your letter from Hogwarts, look at this book where legal academics from around the world look at the depiction of law and legal institutions in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels.

Without many of our normal Halloween festivities this year, if you need a little break from the law, remember that you can also browse the undergraduate library's collection and check out a classic thriller novel or movie, maybe one by macabre master [Stephen King](#). Law students have borrowing privileges for the undergraduate library's materials, so enjoy!

LP1 students: In case you don't get enough tricks and treats this Halloween season, don't forget to sign up for your upcoming mandatory training sessions, where you'll learn plenty of tricks (like how to research effectively) and treats (like getting to hang out on Zoom with your awesome law librarians)!

Please remember to Halloween responsibly!